

Dispersing and Giving to the Poor,
CONSIDER'D:

1728
IN A
S E R M O N

Preached in *Hanover-street,*
March 9. 1728.

Being the Lord's Day after the Interment
of Mr. JOSEPH HAYES, who
dy'd Feb. 25. 1728. Aged seventy six.

By J. EARLE, D.D. *R*
Chaplain to his GRACE the Duke of
DOUGLAS.

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. GREY, at the Cross-Keys in
the Poultry. M.DCC.XXIX.

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272

Difficult and Great to the Poor
CONSIDERED:

S E R M O N

Preached in Hammer-Smith

March 9. 1728.

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Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of
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Printed for J. GRAY, at the Golden-
Rule in St. Dunstons Church.

(Price 4 s.)

T O
Mrs. Hayes.

MADAM,

THOUGH the excellent Person, whose Decease is so universally lamented, was pleas'd to order in his Will, that no *Funeral Sermon* should be preached for him; and for that Reason I did not expressly enter into his Character, when

it might have been expected: yet, as I conceived he had no Right to determine me not to preach upon a Subject suitable to the Occasion, so I have ventured to publish the Discourse I made the Lord's Day after his Interment: Taking it wholly upon myself, if what I have done be virtually a Contradiction to his Orders; and declaring it to be entirely without the Direction of his *Executors*.

However, I am surely at liberty to address to You in a manner which suits my Character as your Minister and Friend; and at once to profess my Gratitude for the kind and handsome Treatment I have received from You for above two and twenty Years; and offer something to your Thoughts suitable to the melancholy Occasion.

God

God has lengthned out your Life to a great Age ; and I heartily pray many Years more may be added to your Days : And that God may please to continue that Soundness of Mind, and Measure of Health, with which he has blessed You hitherto. This was Mr. *Hayes's* Felicity, that his Capacity of going about doing Good was continued till a very little while before his Death. And it is what every wise Man would wish for himself ; desiring Life no longer than he might be useful.

You cannot be surpris'd at the Removal of your desirable Companion ; nor repine without being greatly to blame, that after having lived with him above forty Years, (in which time he enjoyed almost perfect Health) You have seen him called from You into a better World,
full

full of Days and of good Works. You will consider, that he was highly favoured by Providence, and has left as great an Example of Liberality as the Age has afforded. I never heard the manner of his getting his Estate questioned; and never knew the manner of his using it equalled. He hath a *good Report of all Men, and of the Truth itself. His Memory is blessed.* And You may promise yourself a peculiar Regard from all his Acquaintance; and especially comfort yourself in Expectation, that the many to whom he did so liberally minister, will not cease to pray, that God would bless You, and the only Remains of the good Man, with the best of Blessings.

It pleased God to take *her Mother* away in the Prime of Life. Excuse my touching upon so tender a Point. But God supported You under that
fore

fore Affliction : And he that has hitherto helped You will, I trust, never fail You, nor forsake You : only put your Trust in him, and remember how near You are to that better Country; where all Tears shall be wiped from your Eyes, and where You shall be for ever with the Lord. Think of the Spirits of just Men made perfect; to the general Assembly of which You will be soon called; and of that glorious Day, when God will bring with him all that sleep in Jesus. When, I doubt not, You will meet with those over whom You now mourn, never to part any more; particularly your lately deceased *Consort*, who, we have reason to believe, will shine bright among those to whom the Judge shall say, *Come ye Blessed*; taking notice of their Love to himself, as expressed in their Charity to his Members. In the mean time, cast
your

(viii)

your Burden upon the Lord, and he
will sustain You, and make the so-
rest Afflictions work together for
your Good. This is the sincere Prayer
of,

MADAM,

Your Obliged

Humble Servant,



J. Earle.

PSAL. cxii. 9.

*He hath dispersed, he hath given to
the Poor ; his Righteousness endu-
reth for ever.*

IN the first Verse of this Psalm we have a general Declaration of the Happiness and Character of a good Man. *Blessed is the Man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his Commandments.* In the Sequel of it the Psalmist is more particular in both, taking notice of his Disposition to Beneficence, and the Reward consequent upon it; v. 4, 5, 6, and in the Text I have just read. This Beneficence, or, as we commonly call it, *Charity*, I shall first state, and then recommend.

1.) *State the Nature of it.* This is fit to be done at large, and more distinctly ; because it is not merely giving something of our Substance to the Poor that denominates a Man charitable in the Sight of God, and intitles to the Reward. For the Hypocrites in our Saviour's time gave Alms, *Mat. vi.* and St. Paul supposes it possible for a Man

to give all his Goods to feed the Poor, and yet find no account in it, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. In Cases of Morality, the Thing done must be considered in Connexion with the Manner of doing it; or it will not be placed to Account in the Day of Retribution. What Good we do, must be well done. Therefore,

1. The truly charitable Man ministers to the Necessities of his Neighbour out of regard to God. What he does is for God's sake. He considers that God expects it from him; and insists upon it, that he should not forget to do Good, and to communicate, Heb. xiii. 16. That what he has is not absolutely his own: That he has only what may be called a *Sub-Propriety* in whatever he possesses: Is only a Steward, and accountable to his great Master how he disposes of the Talents committed to him; that they are to be used, not hid; and that he is to disperse, not hoard what he is entrusted with. He knows that it is required in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful, 1 Cor. iv. 2. and that according as his Account stands, at last his Lot will be, either with the good and faithful Servants, or the wicked and slothful ones; Mat. xxv. 21, 26. Either blessed of the Father, or cursed, with the Devil and his Angels, ver. xxxiv. 41. And this Part of our Saviour's Discourse has evidently a reference to the Affair of Charity.

He is also influenced by Gratitude, and thinks it highly reasonable, that as God has distinguished him by his Providence, and put him into a Condition of giving, instead of laying him under a Necessity of receiving, he should honour him with his Substance. Remembring the Words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35. Especially the Love of Christ constrains him to this Service. This is the grand Motive to Christian Liberality. So the Apostle, 2 Cor. viii. 9. *For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that tho' he was rich, yet for your Sakes he became poor, that ye thro' his Poverty might be rich.* The generous Christian regards the great God and his Saviour, and takes every fair Opportunity of expressing his Love to his Lord in shewing Kindness to his Members. How strongly do these Words move him, *Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me?* He loves his Redeemer, and thus proves the Sincerity of his Love. See 2 Cor. viii. 8.

But the spurious Charity of Hypocrites has its Rise in a vicious Self-Love. They often court Applause in a gross and nauseous manner. They do their *Alms to be seen of Men*, Mat. vi. 1. that they may have *Glory of Men*, ver. 2. without any proper regard to *Him who sees in secret*, ver. 4. This Principle has produced many pompous Charities;

ties ; which, how beneficial soever they have been to the Publick, will turn to no account to the Donors in another World : they have their Reward in this. *Verily I say unto you, they have their Reward,* ver. 2.

Others act upon a yet lower Motive ; their Charities are Baits. They give merely to get ; and too often put on a Shew of Liberality, that they may rob without Suspicion. They give Alms, as those of old made *long Prayers*, that they may devour *Widows Houses*. Put on a Guise of Charity, that they may the more easily compass their villainous Designs. I wish this were never the Case.

And I wish too that those, whose Alms are purely the Effect of a tender and compassionate Temper, would turn them into a Sacrifice, by doing them for God and Christ's Sake. It's a thousand pities that such should lose their Reward. And yet so it must be, if they do it *not at all unto him*. For nothing of this kind can be acceptable with God, but what is done for his Glory. I mean so as to be rewarded with the Christian Blessedness. For as to providential Rewards in this Life I am not now speaking. In a word, true Charity is for God's Sake.

2. The charitable Man gives *his own* : what he acquires honestly, or comes fairly by. Whether it be by Inheritance, Industry in a lawful Calling, or the Favour which God gives him in the Sight of Men. If
People

People amass Wealth by Extortion, Lying, Cheating, or base Flattery, or any indirect and dishonest Methods; what they give out of Possessions so acquired, is Restitution at best, not Charity. For the *Lord hates Robbery for Burnt-Offering*, Isa. lxi. 8. God said to his People of old, *Deut. xxiii. 18. Thou shalt not bring the Hire of a Whore, or the Price of a Dog, into the House of the Lord thy God for any Vow.* And surely he will not accept the *Wages of Unrighteousness*, if Men offer to lend it to his Poor upon the Security of his Promise; *Prov. xix. 17.* It may be a Duty in such Cases to give, but it will never be admitted in their Account under the Article of Charity.

3. He gives in Proportion to his Ability, *as God hath prospered him*, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. It is not otherwise *Liberality*, ver. 3. A Man of a right Spirit is more inclined to the expensive Extreme, as an Error on the right hand. To be sure he will not give Mites, when he can afford Talents. He that does not give what Conscience would tell him he ought, must not expect his Gift to be accepted as tho' he had performed to the full. If Men expect a *full Reward*, they must manage accordingly. For the Apostle has told us, that *he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly*, 2 Cor. ix. 6. And surely no good Man will pretend to compound with God, or act the Part of an insolvent Debtor, when

when he has it by him. Tho' the Story of *Ananias and Sapphira*, who *kept back Part of the Price*, Acts v. 2. be not parallel to his Case, he makes this Use of it, that we are not to deal deceitfully in the Affair of Charity. And that Expression of the Apostle bears upon his Mind, *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*. He knows that God expects to reap in proportion to what he has sown: and that where he has given much, he requires accordingly.

He will not make the usual Excuses which Covetousness dictates. That Affairs are uncertain, and he or his may come to want; and the larger Stock he has, the less his Danger is. No; he knows that at this rate of arguing, he should not disperse at all; but keep whatever he can get. He is sensible that God can scatter his biggest Hoard, and give Wings to even golden Mountains; and on the contrary, can *blefs his Basket* and *his Store*. And as all depends upon his Favour, *that* is more likely to be secured in the Way of his Duty, than out of it. He believes what God has said, *Prov. xi. 25. The liberal Soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also* himself: which is confirmed in the New Testament, *2 Cor. ix. 8, 9, 10. God is able to make all Grace abound towards you: that ye always having all Sufficiency in all things may abound to every good Work: As it is written He hath dispersed*

dispersed; he hath given to the Poor; his Righteousness endureth for ever. Now he that minis-
 tresth Seed to the Sower, both minister Bread
 for your Food, and multiply your Seed sown,
 and increase your Fruits of Righteousness. He
 is under the Influence of that of the Prophet.
*The liberal Man deviseth liberal things, and by
 liberal things shall he stand.* He knows what
 the wise Man observes to be matter of fre-
 quent Experience. *There is that scattereth,
 and yet increaseth; and there is that with-
 holdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to
 Poverty;* Prov. xi. 24. And a Prospect of
 bad Times is an Argument with him to lay
 out more freely in this Service; according
 to that of a wiser Man than e'er a Miser of
 them all: *Eccles. xi. 2. Give a Portion to se-
 ven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not
 what Evil shall be upon the Earth.* To im-
 press this the more, I shall use the Words
 of a most excellent *Paraphrast* upon this
 Text. " Give therefore unto others some
 " Part of the good things which God hath
 " given thee; and give very liberally; and
 " be not weary neither of well doing; but
 " tho' there be many Suitors that sollicit
 " thy Charity, extend thy Bounty to them
 " rather above than beneath thy Ability:
 " for thou knowest not how calamitous the
 " Times may shortly be: And then the
 " Good thou hast done will stand thee in
 " greater stead than all the Goods thou en-
 " joyest:

“joyest : which perhaps may be taken from
 “thee, and leave thee nothing to do good
 “withall ; or make thee the Object of other
 “Mens Charity ; which no Person hath
 “greater reason to expect than he who,
 “when he had wherewithall, hath been
 “kind to others in that Condition. *Patrick.*
 And in his Annotations, the same Author
 hath these Expressions, “Here again *Solomon*
 “contradicts the vulgar Principle upon
 “which covetous Wretches move, and
 “directs quite the contrary. They think
 “all is lost that is given away in Charity.
 “No such matter, saith the Preacher ; the
 “Fruit of it will be found hereafter beyond
 “what can be imagined. O, saith
 “the covetous Man again, I know not what
 “will be hereafter : Now I have enough,
 “but in the latter Part of my Life I may
 “want, and therefore it is best to save while
 “I may. No, saith the Preacher, for that
 “very Reason give ; because thou knowest
 “not what may be hereafter, when that
 “may be taken from thee which thou wilt
 “not now bestow, &c.

And whereas the great Gulph, as I think
Mr. Baxter somewhere calls it, that swallows
 up what should be scattered in Charity,
 is a Pretence of providing for Children ;
 a good Man considers that tho’ it be his
 Duty to provide for his own, especially
 those of his own House, yet it is not his only
 Duty :

Duty: as it must be, if a Man was to save all for them; and having Wife and Children would make the Commandment of God concerning Charity of no Force. He considers who provided for him, when perhaps his *Father and Mother forsook* him: And, tho' he will take proper Care, can trust *them* with that Providence which was his own Inheritance: Or if he had an Inheritance from his Fathers, he remembers that his Family, how long soever it was ago, had a Rise from small Beginnings, and the Way to secure its flourishing Estate, is to *delight greatly* in this, as well as the rest of God's Commandments. See *ver. 2 and 3*, of this Psalm. He considers too that God may take away those very Children for whose sake he incurs the Displeasure of his heavenly Father. Nay, that he can easily do worse than take them away; make them a Grief of Heart to the Parents while they live, and a Scandal to their Family afterwards. He attends to that of *Solomon, Eccles. v. 13. There is a sore Evil which I have seen under the Sun, namely, Riches kept for the Owners thereof to their Hurt. But those Riches perish by evil Travel: and he begetteth a Son, and there is nothing in his Hand. And is affected with that chap. ii. 19. Who knoweth whether he shall be a wise Man or a Fool?*

A good Man sees no Reason why one that has a numerous Offspring should not be li-

beral in proportion to his Ability ; but he is astonished at the Covetousness of such who, as the wise Man speaks, *have neither Child nor Brother*, Eccl. iv. 8. that is, none for whom they need spare. *Surely this is Vanity, and a great Evil*; ii. 21. And yet how common is this Case ? All I think such have to say for themselves, is, they design great things when they die. This is often but a mere Pretence : Or if they really design it, how often are their Projects disappointed ? Or if they should effect what they purpose, do they imagine that this will be allowed as a Plea for their having done no Good while they lived ? They hoard, while thousands of their Cotemporaries want; and, as far as in them lies, let them perish, while they pretend a Care for miserable Objects in after-times. When they can keep it no longer, they will order some Good to be done with it. And God, who knows their Mind, sometimes removes them unexpectedly out of the Way of their own Charity, and in Pity to the Poor hastens the Reversion. Or if he lets them live long, it seems to me that such scandalous *Misers* are kept above Ground only as Monsters to be stared at for the Warning of others. But a good Man will do all the Good he can while he lives; and if he can do more at Death, he will not decline it. And whenever he does it, it shall be in such Proportions

portions as appear reasonable ; which leads to the

4. His liberal Charity is conducted with *Wisdom*. Thus *ver. 5.* of this Psalm ; *He will guide his Affairs with Discretion*. You know that in every Affair of Consequence there is need of that *Wisdom* which is *profitable to direct*, Ecclef. x. 10. Without this, Charity, as well as other Virtues, would be a Blemish instead of an Honour to our Profession. The good Man therefore disperses according to the best of his Judgment, and that's all that can be required. He calculates as well as he can what he may spare without Injustice to his Family ; and considers what Objects are the most proper for him to relieve ; and what Methods of Disposition will best serve the Purposes of his Charity : Whether, for example, he shall give or lend ; (thus part of the 5th Verse is paraphrased by the forementioned Author, " giving to one, and lending to another, as " Occasion serves :) And in what Proportions he shall do either, and whether at once, or successively, &c.

A good Man that relieves the Necessities of the Poor for God's sake will make Conscience, I say, of doing according to the best of his Skill. And tho' by-standers may be ready to censure his Conduct, especially the covetous, if he be remarkably liberal, will be sure to find fault with his Management:

yet we should consider, he must judge for himself: and where there is a great deal of Charity God will make Allowance for a little Indiscretion. And the Defect were better be in the Head than the Heart. Tho' the People of great Discretion may not be able to comprehend how *Paul* could allow himself to ascribe it to the *Grace of God*, that the *Macedonians* were willing not only to their Power, but beyond it, 2 Cor. viii. 1, 3. Yet an Excess of Zeal, not in persecuting, but relieving, may be easily admitted as an Excuse for a Defect of Prudence. Whereas, I doubt, they will not so easily find their Excess of Caution allowed upon the Balance for their Defect of Charity.

Nevertheless, a good Man, *if he will be perfect* in his Liberality, must *acquaint himself with Wisdom*. Especially he must see that his Judgment be not bias'd by carnal Considerations: and principally that which is apt to have too much Influence upon even honest Minds, I mean Zeal for a Party. The Question should not be, How does the Man think in Matters about which good Men may differ? but, Is he poor? In what degree of Necessity is he? Has he, to appearance, an honest Principle? Is his Poverty owing to Providence, or Folly or Wickedness? Is he sober and industrious? Is there any Prospect of retrieving his Affairs? What other Springs of Supply has he? and an

an hundred things more, into the Particulars of which it cannot be expected I should now enter: according to which our Contribution ought in all reason to be regulated: in order to which we should *ask Wisdom of God*, James i. 5.

5. What a good Man does in this kind, he does with proper *Humility*. Not but a Man may with Pleasure be conscious to himself of *the Grace of God bestowed upon him*. And (tho' his Charities be ordinarily, as our Saviour directs, *done in secret*) may be willing, upon occasion, to be known as a Benefactor, letting *his Light shine before Men* for God's Glory, and to set an Example: yet surely Charity, in this Branch of it, *vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up*, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. It seems needless to say, that the most generous Benefactor to Mankind hath not whereof to *glory before God*.

A good Man will consider, who gave him his Ability to communicate. To whom he owes it that he is a Giver, and not a Receiver. If he was born to his Estate, *that*, to be sure, was not his Merit. And if he acquired it, he is obliged to many concurring Circumstances, out of his own Power, without which he could not have succeeded. If he have any Modesty, he must ascribe it to the divine Blessing, without which all his Pains and Care would have been ineffectual. Thus *David* own'd the Case to stand, when
he

he and his People had contributed so liberally to the Building of the Temple, 1 Chron. xxix. 12, 16. *Both Riches and Honour come of thee—O Lord our God, all this Store that we have prepared cometh of thine Hand, and is all thine own; and ver. 14. All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.*

He will also consider who gave him the Heart to use it aright. Thus *David* in the forementioned Place, *Who am I, and what is my People, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?* In the *Targum* it is thus paraphrased, *Who hast given such Plenty, that we are able to offer these Gifts.* He should have added, saith Bishop *Patrick*,
 “ And also given us a Heart to part with
 “ them for thy Service—And his Son *Solomon* observes to this Purpose, *Eccles. v. 19. Every Man also to whom God hath given Riches and Wealth, and hath given him Power to eat thereof, and to take his Portion, and rejoice in his Labour, this is the Gift of God.* Which Words are thus paraphrased by the forementioned Author. “ Whosoever he be
 “ whom God hath blessed not only with
 “ Plenty and Abundance of worldly Goods,
 “ but also with such a noble and generous
 “ Mind, that he is not their Slave, but truly
 “ Master of them, being able to enjoy them
 “ innocently, and to take his Share in them,
 “ and that with Chearfulness and Delight
 “ in doing Good to others; let him be very
 “ thankful

" thankful to the Almighty. As it is by the Favour of God that we *have to give to him that needeth*; so it is by his Grace that we have a Heart according to our Circumstances.

A good Man will also with due Humility reflect upon his Failings even in that wherein he excels. Perhaps few of those who may be said to have got their Estate honestly, can pretend, that *no Blot has cleaved to their Hands*. Who can say in this any more than other respects, *I have made my Way perfect*? It was an Observation of the Son of Sirach, that *as a Nail sticketh fast between the Joinings of the Stones; so doth Sin stick close between Buying and Selling*. Has there been no Deceit, no unlawful Artifice used in getting any Part of his Estate? Has he never imposed upon the Ignorance of his Neighbour, or fallen short of what is required by the heathen Moralist? *Ut nequid omnino, quod venditor novit, emptor ignoret*: That what the Seller knows the Buyer should be acquainted with: that is, so far as is necessary to his not being imposed upon. But suppose they have kept up to the golden Rule of doing as they would be done by, in acquiring their Substance, have they not failed in the Distribution of it in many Instances? Have they done as much Good as they might, and as well as they could? May not a good Man find Defects enough
in

in his Alms, as well as in his Devotions, to humble him before God, and check his Inclination to plead Merit with his Maker? Mr. *Herbert* answered excellently, when a Friend went about to comfort him with the Remembrance of his having been instrumental in rebuilding a Church with great Pains and Expence, *It is a good Work if it be sprinkled with the Blood of Christ.* And the Writer of his Life observes, he used to conclude all things that might seem to tend any Way to his Honour, with these Words which he chose for his Motto, *Less than the least of God's Mercies.*

And even as to Man, a truly charitable Person will see no reason for Arrogance, but a great deal for Modesty. He will not despise those whom he relieves; nor receive more Homage from them than is proper. He will not care to upbraid them with what he has given them; nor ever expect any mean or servile Compliances upon that account, which are beneath the Dignity of human Nature: much less that they should be criminally at his Devotion, because he hath contributed to their Subsistence. He will scorn to insult where he has relieved; or expect to bear sway, right or wrong, because his Wealth and Liberality make him significant: as tho' he imagined a Man's Sense were in Proportion to his Purse; and giving Money were the same thing as giving Reasons.

Reasons. Pride, Insolence, and Arrogance, will infallibly prove as *dead Flies* in the most costly Perfume, *Eccl. x. 1.* The Case of Charity is no Exception to that general Rule, *So much Humility as a Man has, so much Grace he has, and no more.*

6. A truly charitable Man will make Conscience of the *rest of his Duty*. This is a necessary Consequence of his doing it in regard to God. He that does one thing to please his Maker, and honour his Redeemer, will do every thing; *i. e.* will make no Exceptions, but obey without Reserve. To this Purpose is that of *James ii. 1.* *He that said do not commit Adultery, said also do not kill.* A good Man will never imagine that he may commute with God, and be excused one Duty for being very exact in another. I am sure this cannot be the Import of that Text, that *Charity shall cover the Multitude of Sins*, *1 Pet. iv. 8.* Giving liberally upon proper Occasions is indeed highly to be commended: but he must be in an odd Way of Thinking, that can suppose it will atone for Want of Piety, Justice, Temperance, or Meekness, or any Branch of that Holiness without which *no Man shall see the Lord*, *Heb. xii. 14.* Where there is not a sincere Respect to all God's Commandments, Mens applauded Charity is only Hypocrisy, Superstition, or constitutional Goodness. And may I not freely say, we have no more reason to
D hope

hope well concerning an irreligious, debauched, proud charitable Man, than we have of a godly Knave, or devout *Miser*. We must take the Scriptures together in our Scheme of Morality, as well as in our System of Divinity, and not put asunder what God has joined.

• 7. Lastly, the Charity I am describing implies *Perseverance*. While Ability and Opportunity lasts, the good Man will *not be weary in well-doing*. He will *not leave off to be wise, and to do Good*. He remembers that of the Preacher, *Eccl. xi. 6. In the Morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening hold not thy Hand*; i. e. says the forementioned Author, “ Let nothing discourage thee from taking
“ all Opportunities to give thine Alms incessantly, early and late, when thou art
“ young, and when thou art old, when
“ things smile upon thee, and when thou art
“ in a declining Condition, for thou knowest
“ not which will hit to do the most Good
“ unto others, and to bring the greatest
“ Blessing back upon thyself, or whether all
“ may prove alike beneficial to both.

A good Man will be *stedfast, and always abounding in this Work of the Lord*. Thus we may understand the latter Part of the Text, *His Righteousness endureth for ever*. He is ever producing some new Fruit of his Charity, saith the *Bishop*. What the Psalmist commends, says *Calvin*, is not a sudden

den Fit or Start, but a steady Course of Charity. But this is not said to exclude another Sense in which the Words may be understood, namely, to represent the good Man's Reward. This leads me to the second general Head ; which is,

2.) To *recommend* the Virtue which I have been describing—This is a common Subject, and is so frequently insisted upon, that I need only give a few Hints.

1. This Duty rightly performed shews Men to be *Partakers of a divine Nature*. They are like God, whose Goodness is the most celebrated of all his Perfections. Thus they manifest themselves to be *the Children of their Father which is in Heaven*. This is to be *perfect as their Father which is in Heaven is perfect* ; Mat. v. 45, 48.

2. In this they are eminently *conformed to Christ*, who *went about doing Good*, Acts x. 38. He indeed subsisted upon the Contributions of his Followers, *Luke viii. 3.* where honourable mention is made of some who *ministred unto him of their Substance*. Yet we know there was a Purse in his Family kept for Charity, (tho' he proved a Traitor that bare it.) See *John xiii. 29.* And where that failed, Miracle was called in to its Assistance. Our blessed Lord's Example recommended a charitable Disposition to his Disciples ; and how much is it to their Honour, of whom it may be said, the *same Mind is*

in them which was also in Christ Jesus, Ph. ii. 5.

3. There is a great and sure *Reward* appointed for them. They shall reap what they have sown, and in proportion to their Seed. And this Reward shall be eternal. In this Sense *their Righteousness endureth for ever*. They have often some kind of Recompense here. While they live they are honoured, and beloved; inasmuch that, as the Apostle speaks, for a good Man some would even dare to die, Rom. v. 7. And when they are dead, their Memory is precious, ver. 6. of this Psalm, *The Righteous shall be held in everlasting Remembrance*. Their Family too, often fares the better for their Charity; ver. 2, 3. *His Seed shall be mighty upon the Earth, the Generation of the Upright shall be blessed; Wealth and Riches shall be in his House*. And tho' these things are not so much to be depended upon under the present Dispensation, yet they may hope to be under God's special Protection in their Pilgrimage. They shall be delivered or supported in a time of Distress. To such *there ariseth Light in the Darkness*. He shall not be moved for ever. He shall not be afraid of evil Tidings: his Heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, ver. 4, 5, 6, 7. *Blessed is he that considereth the Poor—The Lord will strengthen him upon the Bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his Bed in his Sickness*, Psal. xli. 1—3. However, they shall be

be recompensed at the Resurrection of the Just. They shall enter into Life eternal. And the full Contents of what God has provided for them, neither hath Eye seen, nor Ear heard, nor can Words tell.

I shall only add some *practical* Remarks upon the whole.

I. *Let us take heed and beware of Covetousness*, Luke xii. 15. For where this prevails Charity can have no Place. Men may perhaps give to serve some temporal Purposes, or to still a clamorous Conscience. But as these Idolaters cannot be supposed to do it for God's sake, (because *the Love of the Father is not in them*, John ii. 15.) you know it cannot be allowed to account. Nor have they any proper Love to their Neighbour, any farther than their own dear selves are concerned. And the best of it is, their wretched Temper takes Vengeance there too. Some of them grudge themselves as well as others. But none of them have any true Pity upon their Fellow-Creatures, if they are easy themselves. Dr. *Bates* has observed very justly, " That Covetousness infuses an unrelenting Frame into the Breast, " hardens the Bowels, and makes them incapable of melting Impressions. The languishing Looks, the pleading Eyes, the Complaints and Calamities of the miserable, do not affect those in whom Covetousness reigns; the tender Inclinations of " Hu-

“ Humanity are quenched by it, *p.* 566. And the same Author remarks how difficult the Cure of such a Temper is. They have so many Pretences to justify themselves; in-
somuch that he compares them to Persons sick beyond a Sense of their Disease, and near Death without feeling the Presages of it; *ibid.* Let us dread the Incroachments of such a Temper! Read seriously 1 *Tim.* vi. 17, 18. *Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*

2. Let us see that our Charity have the proper Characters which will render it acceptable to God; and intitle us to an eternal Reward. Recollect what has been offered to this Purpose; And seriously think, how sad it will be to have what we mainly depend upon prove unserviceable. How terrible will the Disappointment be! Like going to buy Necessaries, when our Money is all false! Or trusting to a Medicine which is wrong prepared in a dangerous Distemper! How dreadful will it be to approach the Judge in full Confidence, and hear him say, *Depart from me ye that Work Iniquity?*

3. Let us lament the Loss of such Persons as I have been describing. When the Righteous perish, we are to lay it to Heart,

especially *when merciful Men are taken away*, it is to be regretted, *Isa. lvii. 1.* What I might have said under this Head, and you had reason to expect, I am forbidden to represent by the Humility of our *deceased Friend*, who ordered in his last Will, that no Funeral Sermon should be preached for him. But tho' I am not allowed to make a proper Application of the foregoing Discourse, to do him Justice, I neither can, nor desire, to hinder you. Let his *own Works praise him in the Gates*, *Prov. xxxi. 31.*

4. Let us earnestly *pray to God* that he would raise up others of the same Spirit and Capacity. That he would give them Hearts who have Ability; or them Ability who have Hearts. He can do either. His is *the Earth, and the Fulness thereof*: And he hath *the residue of the Spirit*. And about this we should be the more sollicitous, because so much depends upon it. This seems to be the *principal* good Symptom in the Case of these Kingdoms, that this sort of Charity seems to flourish, and that too among Protestants of all Denominations. I should have been tempted to have said the *only* one, but that I think it is visible that Charity, in opposition to wrathful Contentions about *Matters of doubtful Disputation* has been lately seeming to revive. Let us pray however, that there may be more of that Wisdom which is from above, which is *first pure,*
then

then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy, Ja. iii. 17.

5. Let not People of honest Minds and mean Circumstances be discouraged because they cannot shine in this Way as others have done, and honour their Redeemer in so eminent a manner. God has given many of you, I doubt not, a Heart as generous as your charitable Neighbours, and you only want Capacity of expressing it to as good Purpose. Remember what God has said, *2 Cor. viii. 12. If there be first a willing Mind, it is accepted according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not.* And a poor Man's two Mites may be as acceptably cast into God's Treasury, as the ten Talents of the wealthy. See to this purpose, *Luke xxi. 1-4.* It depends upon the Temper of Mind with which you do it, not the Quantity of what you offer. And I am very much mistaken, if at the Last Day there will not be found some Persons that never had a hundred, more charitable than others that have given away thousands, and their Reward will be in Proportion. To conclude: Let us *love the Lord Jesus in Sincerity*, and do the best we can to promote his Interest; and we shall never regret it hereafter, that for mere Want of Capacity we were so little significant here.